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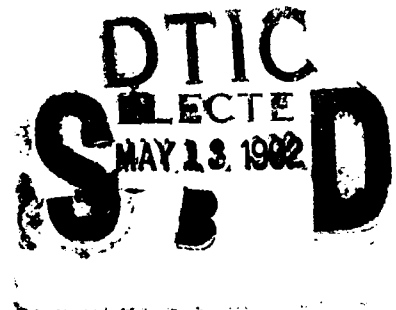
NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.

IS THE MARINE CORPS' DOCTRINE OF MANEUVER WARFARE SYNERGETIC  
WITH THE JOINT DOCTRINE FOR AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS?

by

Glenn Wagner

Major, United States Marine Corps



A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

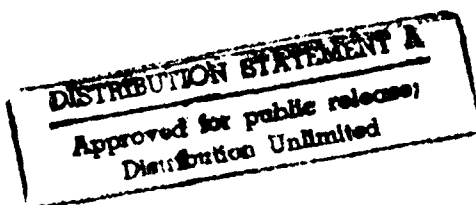
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Signature: Glenn Wagner

19 June 1992

Paper directed by Lieutenant Colonel William Spain  
Department of Military Operations

Approved by:



\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Research Advisor Date

92-12655



## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION <u>UNCLAS</u>		1b RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
1 SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY		3 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: Approved for Public Release; distribution is unlimited	
2b DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE		5 MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
4 PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		7a NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6a NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	6b OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable) C	7b ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	
6c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) NAVAL WAR COLLEGE NEWPORT, R.I. 02841		9 PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8a NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	8b OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable)	10 SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
8c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.
		TASK NO.	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11 TITLE (Include Security Classification) Is the Marine Corps' Doctrine of Maneuver Warfare Synergetic with the Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations (Unclassified)			
12 PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) Glenn Wagner, <u>MAJOR, USMC</u>			
a. TYPE OF REPORT FINAL	13b TIME COVERED FROM TO	14 DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 92 Feb 13	15 PAGE COUNT 28
16 SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.			
17 COSATI CODES		18 SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	
		Comparison of Maneuver Warfare and Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Warfare	
19 ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) The Marine Corps doctrine of maneuver warfare is compared with the joint doctrine for amphibious warfare. The purpose of this paper is to determine if the Marine Corps' Warfighting FMFM-1 and the Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations JCS Pub 3-02 are compatible. The joint doctrine for amphibious operations is examined at the operational level to determine if the concept supports maneuver warfare. The validity of amphibious operations or the maneuver warfare doctrine are not discussed. The joint doctrine for amphibious operations and the doctrine of maneuver warfare are synergetic. The commanders' judgement, mindset, and knowledge determine if maneuver warfare will be used in amphibious operations.			
20 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS		21 ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION <u>Unclassified</u>	
a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL CHAIRMAN, OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT		22b TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) 841-3414	22c OFFICE SYMBOL C

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

In March 1989 General A.M. Gray, Commandant of the Marine Corps, authorized the publication of the Fleet Marine Force Manual - 1 (FMFM-1) titled Warfighting. This officially established the doctrine of the Marine Corps as maneuver warfare.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of this warfighting doctrine immediately raised controversy among Marines. On one side was a group that welcomed the official establishment of maneuver warfare as something that was long overdue. The opposing sides argued from several points of view. Some felt that maneuver warfare was not enough and wanted to add other values.<sup>2</sup> Others described maneuver warfare as "a simple solution"<sup>3</sup> or that "no style of warfare is appropriate to all occasions."<sup>4</sup> While it is not the purpose of this paper to determine which side was right it should be recognized that not everyone in the Marine Corps agreed with the decision to establish maneuver warfare as the official doctrine. Regardless of the controversy, maneuver warfare became the doctrine of the Marine Corps. This raised questions as to how the new doctrine would affect existing publications in the various functional responsibilities assigned to the Marine Corps.

The first functional responsibility most people think

of when the Marine Corps is mentioned is amphibious operations. Visions of Marines storming across the beach is an image that came out of the Pacific in World War II. However, the greatest contribution to World War II by the Marine Corps was what took place before the war. As General Alexander A. Vandegrift said, "Despite its outstanding record as a combat force in the past war, the Marine Corps' far greater contribution to victory was doctrinal: that is, the fact that the basic amphibious doctrine which carried Allied troops over every beachhead of World War II had been largely shaped -- by U.S. Marines, and mainly between 1922 and 1935."<sup>5</sup> The amphibious operations of World War II in the Pacific theatre are often described as bloody frontal assaults which relied on superior numbers and massive firepower. Tarawa and Iwo Jima are prime examples of the attrition style of warfare used. Although these battles were costly they were successful.

After World War II the National Security Act of 1947 established the roles of the services. One of the primary functions of the Marine Corps was to, "develop, in coordination with the other Military Services, the doctrines, tactics, techniques, and equipment employed by landing forces in amphibious operations."<sup>6</sup> The Navy was assigned the primary responsibility, "To develop, in coordination with the other Services, the doctrines, procedures, and equipment of naval forces for amphibious operations and the doctrine and procedures for joint

amphibious operations."7 As a result of these responsibilities and past experiences, the services have developed the Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations (JCS PUB 3-02).

With the Marine Corps establishing maneuver warfare as its warfighting doctrine, an area of concern was whether the doctrine for amphibious operations, which was based on the experiences of World War II, would be compatible with the new doctrine of the Marine Corps.

This paper compares the doctrine of maneuver warfare, according to FMFM-1, with the doctrine for amphibious operations, according to JCS PUB 3-02. Maneuver warfare is synergetic with the joint doctrine for amphibious operations.

## Chapter 2

### The Philosophy of Maneuver Warfare

In order to compare the Marine Corps' doctrine of maneuver warfare with the Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations it is important to understand the events that lead up to the establishment of the doctrine and what is meant by the philosophy of maneuver warfare.

During the late 1970s and through the 1980s the merits of maneuver warfare were discussed throughout the Marine Corps. General Gray, then the division commander for Second Marine Division, became one of the leading advocates of maneuver warfare, adopting this style of warfighting for his division.<sup>1</sup> The 1980s were a time of growth for the military as a whole. More aircraft, aircraft carriers, and fire support ships, such as battleships, were built or re-activated. Technology, firepower, and sheer numbers of troops and equipment lead many to believe that maneuver warfare was unnecessary and business would be conducted as in the past. However, as the 1980s came to a close, as well as the Reagan Era, it was becoming obvious that financial constraints would have an impact on the services.

It was becoming apparent that the Navy and the Marine Corps would have to reduce in size in the future. This would have an impact on how the Marine Corps planned to fight. In 1989, in his second year as Commandant of the Marine Corps,



General Gray established maneuver warfare as the official doctrine of the Marine Corps.

FMFM-1 was written as a natural progression leading to the establishment of the doctrine of maneuver warfare. It was designed to be read and understood by all officers. Chapter 1 deals with the nature of war. The reader is presented with the basic characteristics, problems, and demands of war. This lead to the theory of war in chapter 2 in which the foundation for the discussion of the conduct of war is laid down. Recognition of how military force relates to the other elements of national power, the spectrum of conflict, and the levels of war are discussed. The reader is made aware of the differences in the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. The offense and defense are analyzed as well as the culminating point. The purpose of this is to bring all readers to a common level in understanding how the decision to adopt maneuver warfare was reached. In this chapter, the FMFM-1 also establishes that the two essential components of combat are fire and movement and describes them as both complementary and mutually dependent. These components provide the foundation for two distinct styles: attrition and maneuver.

Attrition warfare is described as "seeking victory through the cumulative destruction of the enemy's material assets by superior firepower and technology."<sup>2</sup> Progress is measured in quantitative terms. Body counts, as in the Vietnam War, or tonnage sunk, as in the German's submarine warfare of World War II, become the focus of attention.

"Warfare by maneuver stems from a desire to circumvent a problem and attack it from a position of advantage rather than meet it straight on.<sup>3</sup> The goal is to apply strength against the enemy's weakness through speed and surprise. "The object of maneuver is not so much to destroy physically as it is to shatter the enemy's cohesion, organization, command, and psychological balance."<sup>4</sup>

In the past the United States enjoyed numerical and technological superiority. This kind of advantage supported the style of attrition warfare the United States relied on in the past wars. As the potential enemies become stronger and more advanced technologically this style of warfare can no longer be counted on to win the future wars.

Expeditionary situations that the Marine Corps is most likely to find itself involved require a concept with which the United States can win quickly, with minimum casualties and limited external support, against a larger foe on his home soil.<sup>5</sup> History suggests that God is on the side of the bigger battalion -- unless the smaller battalion has a better idea.<sup>6</sup> Based on this perception the Commandant established the doctrine of maneuver warfare.

Maneuver warfare is defined by the FMFM-1 in regards to the Marine Corps as "a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a series of rapid, violent, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which he cannot cope."<sup>7</sup> This concept is based on rapid, flexible, and

opportunistic maneuver. It requires disrupting the enemies unity and cohesion; his feeling of security. Defeating an enemy's ability to fight becomes more important than his physical destruction. Surprise and speed characterize the operation. Firepower is not discarded in favor of maneuver. Selective use of firepower, concentrated at the decisive time and place, to support the maneuver is used instead of the age old dependency on firepower to cumulatively attrite the enemy. The tempo is set by the attacking force to seize the initiative and maintain it. Deception is used to keep the enemy guessing or to mold his perception as to what to expect causing him to commit and exposing a weakness. Maneuver warfare requires a decentralized command in order to "cope with the uncertainty, disorder, and fluidity of combat."<sup>8</sup> Subordinate commanders must be prepared to quickly make decisions to maintain the tempo and initiative. To accomplish this they must understand the situation and what is expected. Mission type orders and knowing the commander's intent provide them with the what and why allowing them the flexibility of determining the how. A focus of effort must be established so subordinates understand the priorities.

All the above requires a way of thinking about preparing for and fighting war. Doctrine provides the guidance while leadership, professional education at all levels, and training ensure that the principles are understood, developed and applied. Equipment is used and

acquired to support the effort. In general the doctrine of maneuver warfare is intended to become a way of life.

### Chapter III

#### Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations

Amphibious operations are generally thought of in two opposing views. The skeptics see the operation as a large frontal assault into the heart of the enemy which results in failure such as Gallipoli<sup>1</sup> or as a costly victory such as Tarawa. Proponents of the amphibious operation refer to the landing at Inchon as the classic example of a successful amphibious operation.<sup>2</sup> Even the latest use of an amphibious task force in Desert Storm is viewed with opposing conclusions. One side proclaims it as the greatest deception in recent history while the other side points at the inability of the United States to be able to land forces on a modern day hostile shore.<sup>3</sup> The question of the validity of amphibious operations is beyond the scope of this paper. For the purpose of this paper it is important to recognize that both attrition and maneuver warfare styles have been used in the past. It is also apparent that there is some confusion as to what an amphibious operation is. There is even a feeling that until the publication of FMFM-1 both the Marine Corps and the Navy subscribed to attrition warfare, a carry over from the successful amphibious campaigns of World War II.<sup>4</sup>

An amphibious operation is an attack launched from the sea by naval and landing forces embarked in ships or craft

involving a landing on a hostile shore.<sup>5</sup> There are four types of amphibious operations. The amphibious assault is the principle type and involves establishing a force over a hostile shore. The amphibious withdrawal involves extracting forces from a hostile beach by sea in naval ships or craft. The amphibious raid involves a swift incursion into, or a temporary occupancy of, an objective, followed by a planned withdrawal. The amphibious demonstration is an operation conducted for the purpose of deceiving the enemy.<sup>6</sup>

As we can see from the four types of operations nothing limits us to the style of attrition warfare instead we are given options in what the commander can do. This flexibility to assault an enemy along his coastline creates a flank over what may have been considered an obstacle before. Withdrawal allows the commander to reposition his forces for a more favorable situation. The raid offers the commander the opportunity to gather intelligence, eliminate an enemy capability, or cause a diversion. The demonstration deceives the enemy, creating problems for him which he can not afford to ignore and yet is unsure of committing to. The four types of amphibious operations certainly adhere to the principles of maneuver warfare.

The concept of amphibious operations sets the tone for the Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations. Amphibious warfare integrates virtually all types of ships, aircraft, weapons, and landing forces in a concerted military effort against a hostile shore.<sup>7</sup> This integration supports the

principle of focus of effort as described in FMFM-1 in which all forces recognize the priority of the mission which in this case would be the amphibious operation. This is not to suggest that the other areas of concern such as anti-surface warfare, anti-air warfare, etc are not important. It merely recognizes that the purpose of the operation is to conduct an amphibious operation.

The doctrine of amphibious operations describes the essential usefulness of the amphibious operation as stemming from mobility and flexibility. It has the ability to concentrate balanced forces and to strike with great strength at a selected point in the hostile defense system.<sup>8</sup> The mobility afforded to the commander allows him to cover great distances in a relatively short period of time. Flexibility is gained from the options of landing sites available by the mobility. The concentration of balanced forces prepared to strike at the selected point in the enemy's defense gives the commander the option of pitting his strength against the enemy's weakness. In regards to warfare style, amphibious doctrine does not restrict the commander's options. It requires his judgement in how he will apply the principles of the doctrine in accomplishing the mission.

Another characteristic of amphibious operations is surprise. Where the operations will be conducted and when are determined by the commander of the amphibious operation. Even if the enemy recognizes the fact that an amphibious

operation will occur he can only guess about the time and place. With the use of submarines to conduct raids as well as helicopters to fly in assault forces the enemy is not even certain as to the how. The doctrine for amphibious operations recognizes the importance of surprise while at the same time the merits of advance force operations in which the area is prepared in advance for a landing. The doctrine does not establish set procedures that require an amphibious task force to conduct advance force operations or require surprise. The doctrine provides options and allows the commander the flexibility to make the decision based on his judgement.

Critics of the amphibious operations doctrine argue that it is too structured to support the flexibility required in maneuver warfare.<sup>9</sup> Yet, the doctrine provides guidance for the commander not procedures. In preparing to conduct an amphibious operation the amphibious task force goes through a sequence known as PERMA (Planning, Embarkation, Rehearsal, Movement, and Assault). During the planning phase the amphibious task force commander (CATF) and the landing force commander (CLF) decide on a plan. Doctrine suggests developing a primary and alternate plans. Quite often only one plan is developed due to the amount of work required or because of a time constraint. The landing force is then embarked aboard the ships according to the plan. At this point doctrine suggests a rehearsal should be conducted to test the validity of the plan. Again due to



constraints of time this may not take place or no changes are made. During the movement phase the doctrine suggests that the decision should be made on which plan to execute based on the latest update of the enemy's situation. As we can see if only one plan has been made the commander, not doctrine, has restricted the flexibility of the operation.

There is criticism that the current doctrine does not support maneuver warfare since there is no mention of the over the horizon (OTH) concept in the latest edition of JCS PUB 3-02. There is a valid point in the criticism of the absence of the OTH concept in the current JCS PUB 3-02. On 15 March, 1991 General Earnst Cook, Commanding General of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command signed the Over the Horizon Amphibious Operational Concept.<sup>11</sup> The JCS PUB 3-02 does need to be updated to reflect this option that will be and has been available to the commander. Currently two documents are being written or updated which acknowledge the OTH concept. The JCS PUB 3-02 is being updated but is still in its final draft and not officially approved. The JCS PUB 3-02.1 Joint Doctrine for Landing Forces is in a test draft.

Additionally, it is felt that until certain technological developments are purchased, such as the Osprey tilt rotor aircraft and the advanced assault amphibian vehicle (AAAV), maneuver warfare is not possible in amphibious operations.<sup>12</sup> As for these technological purchases while they would certainly enhance the tactics and

techniques of the operation maneuver warfare can be and has been conducted without them.<sup>13</sup> Figuring how to get to the beach quicker and with stealth is not the essence of maneuver warfare. Shattering the enemy's will to fight and destroying his cohesion are the objectives. Targeting his command and control facilities, communications assets, or rear areas create uncertainty in the enemy's mind in his ability to resist. It can break up the whole in small parts. Even if this equipment is purchased it may not solve the problem if used in the traditional way.<sup>14</sup> What is required is the application of the principles of maneuver warfare. The OTH concept should not be viewed as the only way of conducting amphibious operations but as another option available to the commander.

Other critics of the current doctrine argue that massive firepower was required to conduct amphibious operations as if this violates the principles of maneuver warfare.<sup>15</sup> As we discussed above the decision to conduct advance force operations rests with the commander based on his judgement to forego surprise in favor of preparing the landing site for assault. The FMFM-1 states that suppressive effects of firepower are essential to the ability to maneuver. Fires should be concentrated at decisive points to destroy the enemy when the opportunity presents itself.<sup>8</sup> The key is that firepower is used to support maneuver instead of an unfocused aim of the physical destruction of the enemy.

In general the doctrine for amphibious operations provides the commander with guidance in conducting operations. Like maneuver warfare it requires that the commander use his judgement. To apply the doctrine of maneuver warfare to amphibious operations requires that the commander understands the philosophy of maneuver warfare. It also requires him to view the doctrine for amphibious operations as a guide not a checklist of events.

## Chapter IV

### Areas of Conflict

While the preceding chapters have indicated that the Marine Corps' doctrine of maneuver warfare and the Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations are synergistic there are areas of conflict. Some of these areas do not deal directly with maneuver warfare and amphibious doctrine but if not properly addressed or understood by the commander in chief (CINC) of the unified command or the assigned joint task force (JTF) commander it could create problems. In general, the CINC or the commander of the JTF will be issuing the initiating directive to order the amphibious task force to conduct an amphibious operation.

The first area of conflict deals with command and control issues. The principle area of concern deals with the authority and responsibilities of the amphibious task force commander (CATF). Under the current amphibious operations doctrine the CATF, a Navy officer, is responsible for the entire force and the operation and is vested with the commensurate command authority to ensure success of the operation.<sup>1</sup> The composite warfare commander (CWC) concept integrates antiair, antisubmarine, and antisurface warfare in battle group operations. Currently, there is conflicting views on how these two commands operate together.<sup>2</sup> Efforts to integrate the two have met with resistance. Placing the

CATF under the CWC erodes the CATF's authority and responsibility. Subjugating the CWC to the CATF also presents problems including a difference in rank. Operating as separate commands violates the principle of war of unity of command. This invites disaster as almost occurred in Leyete Gulf in World War II. Until this problem is solved by resolving the doctrinal conflicts of the CWC and amphibious operations the CINC or JTF commander must clearly state in the initiating directive the mission, the command authority and the supporting forces.

Another concern in the command and control area is the ability of the CATF to apply maneuver warfare principles to the amphibious operation.<sup>3</sup> It is pointed out that the CATF does not have the background in land warfare and needs to be educated.<sup>4</sup> There is a concern that the Navy tends to think at the tactical level while maneuver warfare takes place at the operational level.<sup>5</sup> The doctrine for amphibious operations clearly states that the CATF is responsible for the operation but it should be remembered that he has a landing force commander (CLF) working with him. A concept of operations is submitted by the CLF to the CATF. Any differences which cannot be resolved are forwarded up the chain of command for resolution. Education can certainly be acquired through formal schools, military periodicals, and training. Unfortunately, many officers will either not attend formal school where maneuver warfare is discussed or have prior to the establishing of maneuver warfare as the

Marine Corps doctrine. Additionally, there are officers who have preconceived ideas on amphibious operations based on past experiences. This is a danger in both services. At the CINC or JTF level this could create problems when initiating directives are drawn up. It could also cause confusion when these staffs try to understand the concept of operations submitted by the CATF and CLF. In order to preclude these types of misunderstandings a thorough knowledge of service doctrines is necessary for those involved in the planning.

There is also a potential problem area in the termination of the amphibious operation. The JCS PUB 3-02 states that instructions for the termination of the operation will be included in the initiating instructions.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, it describes the conditions that must be met in order to terminate.<sup>7</sup> In the amphibious assault termination is considered when the capture of the final ground objectives of the landing forces is accomplished.<sup>8</sup> These three references to termination could cause potential problems. In maneuver warfare the objective is not always physical. Furthermore if the CINC or JTF plans to dissolve or reassign the amphibious task forces upon termination then the landing force commander may become restricted by his logistics plan or use of his reserve forces. As we can see it is imperative that all levels of command understand the concept of operations as well as the conditions for termination.

As we stated above these areas of conflict do not

necessarily require changes to the JCS PUB 3-02 but they can present problems. Service doctrine needs to be understood by all involved in joint operations at all levels.

## Chapter V

### Conclusion

Although some minor changes are needed to update the JCS PUB 3-02, the doctrine of maneuver warfare and the joint doctrine for amphibious operations are synergetic. What can also be concluded from this comparison is that the main problems in applying maneuver warfare stem from misunderstandings of both doctrines and a mindset to conduct business as usual. Ironically, it took an Army officer like General MacArthur to convince Navy and Marine planners that the landing at Inchon could be successful. No doubt it will be as hard to convince the planners of the future of the same kind of move that took place unless we educate all officers of all services and break out of this old mindset. General Gray attempted this by publishing the FMFM-1 and requiring all officers to read and reread it.<sup>1</sup> For amphibious operations this is only part of the audience. The Navy plays a vital role in amphibious operations. It is imperative that all officers regardless of service understand the intent of maneuver warfare and how it can be used in amphibious operations.



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